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ASCS BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service
U. S. Department of Agriculture

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FARMER COMMITTEE ADMINISTRATION OF AGRICULTURAL PROGRAMS

At the State and local levels, the functions and responsibilities of the Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service, as well as those of the Commodity Credit Corporation, are administered by State, county and community Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation (ASC) committees.

These committees are established in accordance with the provisions of section 8(b) of the Soil Conservation and Domestic Allotment Act of 1935, as amended.

The committee system administrative line in the field starts with Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation (ASC) State committees. Under the general supervision of these State committees are some 3,000 elected ASC county committees, most of which are in turn assisted by elected committees in designated local communities.

ASC State committees include from three to five members, appointed by the Secretary of Agriculture. In addition, in each State the Director of the Agricultural Extension Service is an ex officio member of the committee.

The State committee is responsible for the administration of farm programs in each State and for general supervision of the work of county committees. Each State committee appoints a State executive director who supervises and directs the work of the State office staff under policies established by the committee.

The ASC county committees -- one in each "agricultural" county -- have three farmer-members, elected by farmer-elected delegates to a county convention. Since 1966, one committeeman is elected each year, with two committeemen being holdovers. The county agricultural extension agent is a non-voting ex officio member of the committee.

Alternate county committeemen are elected at the time of the annual committeemen elections. If for any reason a committeeman cannot serve, either temporarily or permanently, the first alternate committeeman serves in his place.

Each ASC county committee employs a county executive director who, for the committee, hires the necessary employees for officework and fieldwork and sees that the day-to-day office and field operations are effectively and efficiently performed. The county committee, however, is responsible for program and administrative policies and decisions at the county level.

To assist the county committee in carrying out program administration, community committees of three farmers each are elected annually by other farmers in each designated community within the county. Some counties have only one community area, in which case the community committee becomes the county committee. The designated communities may follow township, school zone, line of subdivision, or natural boundary lines, as determined by the State ASC committee. As in the case of the county committees, alternate community committeemen are also elected at the annual elections -- to serve if one of the regular committeemen cannot.

In general, those eligible to vote in the annual ASC committee elections are persons of legal voting age who have an interest in a farm as owner, tenant, or sharecropper, and who are participating or are eligible to participate in the programs administered by the committees. Those who are not of

legal voting age may vote if they are in charge of the operation of a whole farm.

To hold office as a county or community committeeman, a person must be eligible to vote in the committee elections, must reside in the county or community, as the case may be, and must meet certain other minimum requirements designed primarily to insure that political activity is in no way involved in committee decisions or operations.

About 65,000 farmers throughout the country regularly serve as county or community committeemen. They perform a primary function in seeing that farm programs are practical and appropriate, and that they are administered effectively.

Currently, farmer committees administer locally the following programs:*

- (1) Acreage allotments and marketing quotas.
- (2) The Rural Environmental Assistance Program.
- (3) Prior Long-Term Land Retirement Programs under which agreements with farmers have not expired, including the Cropland Adjustment Program, the Cropland Conversion Program and the Conservation Reserve Program.
- (4) The cotton program.
- (5) The emergency livestock feed program.
- (6) The feed grain program.
- (7) The commodity loan and purchase program.
- (8) The sugar program
- (9) The wheat program.
- (10) The wool program.
- (11) The CCC storage facilities program.

*Under Title VIII of the Agricultural Act of 1970, long-term land retirement programs, similar to the prior Cropland Conversion and Greenspan Programs, were authorized for the 1971-73 calendar years. Under Title VIII, payments could not exceed \$10 million annually for each program.

U. S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

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